

A
GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
CAUSES AND EXISTENCE OF
Frauds, Embezzlements, Peculation and Plunder,
OF HIS MAJESTY'S STORES IN
THE DOCK YARDS,
AND OTHER
PUBLIC REPOSITORIES,
AND IN
THE NAVAL DEPARTMENT IN GENERAL,
WITH REMEDIES
HUMBLY SUGGESTED FOR THE PURPOSE
OF PREVENTING
THESE EVILS AND ABUSES.

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1799.

GENERAL VIEW

OF THE

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author—having been invited to communicate his ideas with respect to the means of preventing the frauds, embezzlements and plunder, which have so long afflicted the Naval departments—has been induced to print a very few Copies of this *General View* in its present form, principally for the use of the Members of Government, and the Commissioners of the different Boards to which the subject applies.

If these suggestions shall be carried into effect, and followed up by the important collateral checks which will arise from the establishment of the Board of Police Revenue, (so strongly recommended by the Select Committee on Finance) having the controul of those Suspicious Trades through the medium of which crimes are generated, little doubt can be entertained, when the Thames Police shall also be improved, of the advantages to the Public, in the Naval as well as in all other Departments, exceeding every possible calculation.

London, October 10, 1799.

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UNDER

A GENERAL VIEW, &c.

UNDER the pressure of those accumulated wrongs, which constitute the extensive frauds, embezzlements, pillage, and plunder, known and acknowledged to exist in the Dock-Yards and other Public Repositories, it is not easy, at first view, to assign a reason for that apparent supineness, on the part of men of known honour and integrity, who have heretofore presided, at the Public Boards, in not using means necessary to remedy so great an evil.

This may possibly be accounted for, by the extreme difficulty which men, constantly occupied in a laborious business, find in pursuing inquiries, or forming arrangements, out of their particular sphere; more especially when such arrangements require that species of legal and general information, which do not usually attach to men whose education and habits of life have run in a different channel.

Under such circumstances, it is scarcely to be wondered at, that greater efforts have not been used, (for great efforts are unquestionably necessary,) to correct those abuses, which have long existed, and which have been progressively increasing; by means of which, not only the property of the Public suffers

a vast annual diminution by frauds and embezzlements, but the foundation of all morals is sapped ; and the most baneful practices extend even to men in the upper and middle ranks of Society, who are too seldom restrained by any correct principle of rectitude in transactions, where the interest of Government only is concerned ; either in the supplying, or afterwards in the taking charge of the custody of Public Stores.

When the object in view is to acquire money, the power of example, sanctioned by usage and custom, will reconcile men by degrees, to enormities and frauds which at first could not have been endured.—Acting under this influence, it too often happens that a distinction is made, as regards moral rectitude, in the minds of many individuals, between *the property of the Nation*, and *private property*.—While the most scrupulous attention to the rules of honour prevails in the latter case, principles, the most relaxed, are yielded to in the former.

And thus it is, that in such situations, inferior agents also, induced by example, become insensibly reconciled to every species of fraud, embezzlement, and peculation.

It is no inconsiderable source of the evil, that large gratuities are given, under the colour of fees,*

*The Select Committee on Finance in the House of Commons, who have derived immortal honour from their various and useful Reports, have in one of those Reports recommended the abolition of fees and the Lords of the Admiralty, and the Commissioners of the subordinate Boards, are entitled to the thanks of their country, from the exertions they are using to carry this measure into effect.

to those who can assist in promoting the views of the fraudulent, or in guarding them against detection.—What was at first considered as the wages of turpitude, at length assumes the form, and is viewed in the light of a fair perquisite of office.

In this manner abuses multiply, and the ingenuity of man is ever fertile in finding some palliative.—Custom and example sanction the greatest enormities ; which at length become fortified by immemorial and progressive usage : it is no wonder, therefore, that the superior Officers find it an Herculean labour to cleanse the Augean stable.

A host of interested individuals opposes them. The task is irksome and ungracious.—The research involves in it matter of deep concern, affecting the peace, comfort, and happiness of old servants of the Crown or the Public, and their families ; who have not perhaps been sufficiently rewarded for their services ; and who, but for such perquisites, could not have acquired property, or even supported themselves with decency.

It is an invidious task to make inquiries, or to impose regulations which may ultimately affect the interest or the character of dependants, who have heretofore, perhaps, been regarded as objects of partiality or affection.—Those whose duty it is to superintend the departments, knowing their own purity, are unwilling to believe that the same principle of rectitude does not regulate the conduct of others in inferior situations : and matters, of apparently

greater importance, constantly forcing themselves upon their attention, the consideration of such abuses is generally postponed : while those who detect or complain of their existence, seldom meet with much encouragement ; unless some specific act of criminality is stated, and then it is referred, as a matter of course, to the proper Law Officers.

These circumstances, however, only prove the necessity of some other and more effectual agency to remove an evil, which (if the assertions of those whose efficient situations give them access to the very best information as to its extent and enormity are correct) *is of the greatest magnitude*, and calls aloud for immediate attention.

To understand how this is to be accomplished, it will be necessary in the first instance to develop the means which are employed to commit these *abuses, frauds, and embezzlements*.—Then to take a general view of the property exposed to depredation, and afterwards to examine the nature and effect of the Laws and regulations now in being for the purpose of preventing these evils ; and last of all, to suggest remedies.

The abuses, frauds, and embezzlements, are multifarious, and are perpetrated through the medium of a vast variety of agencies, which naturally divide themselves into two distinct branches.

The first relates to frauds committed by the connivance and assistance of Clerks, Store-keepers, and inferior Officers in the Dock-yards, and other repositories,

sitories, and in ships of war and transports ; in *receiving and delivering Naval, Victualling, and Ordnance stores*;—*in surveys*;—*in returns of unserviceable stores*;—*in what is called solving off stores*;—*in fraudulent certificates*;—*in the sale of old stores*; and innumerable other devices ; by which a number of individuals are enriched at the Public expence ; and a system of plunder is supported by fraudulent documents and vouchers of articles which have no existence but upon paper.

The second branch relates to the actual pillage of *new and old Cordage, Bolts of Canvas, Sails, Bunting, Twine of all sorts, Fearnought and Kersey, Leather and Hides, old and new Copper, Locks, Hinges and Bolts, Copper Bolts and Nails in immense quantities, Bar-Iron, old Iron, Lead and Solder, Ship's-Plank, Oars, Timber of small sizes, Blocks, Quarterstuff, Candles, Tallow, Oil, Paint, Pitch, Tar, Turpentine, Varnish, Rosin, Beer and Water Casks, Iron Hoops, Biscuit Bags, Beer, Bread, Wine, Brandy, Rum, Oil, Vinegar, Butter, Cheese, Beef, Pork, &c.*—All these articles suffer a vast annual diminution, by means of that plunder which has become habitual to a number of the inferior servants of the Crown, who have in their respective situations, access to such stores.*

* It is by no means to be inferred from what is here stated, that there are not, both among the furnishers and contractors for Public Stores, as well as the Officers and Clerks employed in the departments here alluded to, many individuals of great honour and integrity.—It is to be hoped, the fraudulent are the smallest in point of number, or that they will soon be so.

This

This species of plunder is much encouraged by the difficulty of detection : Vast quantities are constantly provided, and the store-houses are generally full ; it happens therefore as a matter of course, that the articles which were recently deposited are issued first ; and hence many valuable stores, it is said, have remained untouched and unseen for forty or fifty years, until a number of articles perish or become unserviceable from length of time.—An annual inventory, upon the plan suggested at the close of this Tract, rendered practicable by more extensive store-houses, would remove this obvious inconvenience.

All stores being delivered under the authority of warrants signed by the Commissioners and proper officers, the clerks, or in their absence the foreman of the warehouses, where the articles stated in the warrants are deposited, deliver the stores ; and, if opportunities offer, large additional quantities are said to be frequently sent out, by the connivance of the inferior officers ; sometimes stores are said to be delivered two or three times over, under colour of the same warrant, without discovery.

A similar System prevails with regard to stores sent to the public repositories from dismantled ships of war and transports.

Many vessels in the coasting trade, and even ships of foreign nations, it is said, touch at Portsmouth and Plymouth, merely for the purpose of purchasing *cheap stores* ;—and it is well known, that many dealers in
naval

naval stores in the neighbourhood of the Dock-Yards are chiefly supplied in this way.

The plan which prevails at present with regard to the sale of old stores, not only proves a kind of safeguard to these fraudulent dealers ; but is also in itself subject to great abuses, from the delivery of larger quantities than are actually included in the public sales, by which the parties concerned are said frequently to pocket considerable sums of money.*

The artificers in the Dock-yards, availing themselves of their perquisite of Chips, not only commit great frauds, by often cutting up useful timber, and wasting time in doing so ; but also in frequently concealing, within their bundles of chips, copper bolts, and other valuable articles, which are removed by their wives and children, (and, as has appeared in judicial evidence, by boys retained for the purpose) and afterwards sold to itinerant Jews, or to the dealers in old iron and stores, who are always to be found in abundance wherever the Dock-yards are situated.†

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* See a plan for disposing of old stores with a view to remedy the evil, in a subsequent part of this Tract.

† It seems evident, that the abolition of the perquisite of Chips would be a great improvement, and prove the means of correcting many gross abuses which at present prevail. In this suggestion the Author is supported by the very able and decided evidence of Brigadier-General Bentham, before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Finance, in 1798. [*See the 31st Report of that Committee.*] On a supposition that 3000 shipwrights are employed in the several Dock-yards at the wages of 2s. 1d. with the privilege of one bundle of chips each day, which, though not worth more than 6d. to each shipwright, actually costs Government 1s. 6d. because

The Naval, Victualling, and Ordnance Stores pilaged in the Dock-yards and other public Repositories, and also from ships of war, transports, and navy and victualing hoys, in the River Thames, and Medway, must amount to a very large sum annually. The detections, particularly in the victualing hoys and transports, since the establishment of the Marine Police, prove the existence of the evil, and the wide field which it embraces.

The vicinity of the Metropolis;—the assistance afforded by old iron and store shops on the spot;—by carts employed *in this trade alone*, constantly going and coming from and to the Capital;—by the advantage of an easy and safe conveyance for ponderous and heavy articles, in lighters and other craft pas-

because good and valuable timber is often cut down to make these chips.—The following estimate will elucidate what has been stated: and shew the benefits which Government would probably derive from the abolition of this perquisite, even if the wages should be raised, which are perhaps too low at present.

3000 men, working 300 days in a year, entitled to	
900,000 bundles of chips at 1s. 6d.	- - - £.67,500
Time lost to Government in making up these chips,	
equal to 6d. per day	- - - - - 22,500
Articles purloined and stolen, by being concealed within	
these bundles, and by women and children, who	
resort to the yards on pretence of carrying them	
away, supposed	- - - - - 50,000
	<hr/>
	£.117,500
Deduct 6d. a day additional wages in lieu of the perquisite of chips; which, it is understood, the shipwrights would consider as an ample remuneration	22,500
	<hr/>
Presumed gain by this arrangement	£.117,500
	sing

sing up and down the River; and the extensive chain of criminal connection, at every town and village on the Thames and Medway, which a course of many years has formed, joined to the ease with which frauds are committed, have combined to render this nefarious traffic a very serious and alarming evil.

Among the multitude of persons concerned in it, some are said to keep men constantly employed in untwisting the cordage, for the purpose of removing the King's mark, or coloured stran, which is introduced into it as a check against fraud; while others are, in like manner, employed in knocking the Broad Arrow out of copper bolts, nails, bar iron, and other articles, on which it is impressed, so as to elude detection.

It is scarcely to be credited, to what an extent the sale of the cordage, sail-cloth, and other Naval articles, including victualing stores, thus plundered, is carried, in supplying coasting vessels and smaller craft upon the River Thames, at a cheap rate.*

If the actual value of stores deposited at the different Dock-yards and public Repositories in the course of a year, is to be considered as a rule whereby a judgment may be formed of the extent of the losses sustained by frauds, plunder, and embezzlement, it

* When it is recollected, that 9176 coasting vessels, and also 4268 traders to foreign parts, enter and clear in the Custom-house of London, in the course of a year, independent of small craft in the River; an inexhaustible resource for the sale of cheap cordage, sail-cloth, and every other material, must be obvious at first view.

will be found to be very erroneous, since a large proportion of what forms the great aggregate loss sustained annually by Government, does not arise from the actual stealing of stores, but from frauds committed in fabricating documents both at home and abroad.

Reasons have already been assigned, why many individuals reconcile their minds to devices, whereby they may be suddenly enriched at the Public expence, who would be shocked at the idea of overreaching an individual. For the purpose, therefore, of estimating truly the probable extent of the evil, a general view must not only be taken of the Naval, Victualing, Ordnance, and other Stores at all times deposited in the Public Arsenals, but also the stores and provisions on board of the numerous ships of war, and transports, constantly consuming and replacing in all quarters of the Globe ; and to measure the whole by the great annual expence, which is incurred in this necessary service, *The Bulwark of Britain, and the Glory and Pride of the Nation.*

Looking at the subject in this point of view, where the ramifications are so extensive, and the opportunities so numerous, whereby in the hurry and confusion of carrying on a most important public service, frauds and embezzlements may be committed with impunity, the question is, Whether measures are not practicable, whereby the public loss, by the rapacity of individuals, may not be greatly diminished, and what system would be best adapted to the attainment of this object ?

To illustrate this proposition it may be necessary to form an estimate, in the first instance, of the stationary and floating property belonging to his Majesty, in the different Public Arsenals and Ships of War.—The following statement is hazarded with this particular view, not as an accurate detail of facts; for accuracy to a point under the present circumstances is neither practicable nor absolutely necessary. It is sufficient if it tends to elucidate and explain an important point, on the subject of the frauds and depredations committed on the public stores, which would not be otherwise intelligible or useful to the public, to the extent which the Author contemplates.—

Estimate of Floating Naval, Victualing and Ordnance Stores, in the different Repositories and Ships of War.

Naval, Victualing and Ordnance Stores	}	at Deptford and Red House	£.1,800,000
-----		Woolwich - - - - -	150,000
-----		Sheerness - - - - -	100,000
-----		Chatham - - - - -	200,000
-----		Portsmouth - - - - -	1,300,000
-----		Plymouth - - - - -	900,000
-----		Ireland, Leith, and other parts	50,000
-----	{	in the Arsenals at Halifax, and	150,000
		the East and West Indies }	
-----		Gibraltar, Minorca, &c. - -	50,000
-----	{	in 900 Ships of War, and	2,300,000
		Transports in Commission }	
Total - -			<u>£.7,000,000</u>

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The annual pecuniary Supplies for the Navy may be estimated at *Thirteen Millions a year* during war; of which sum about *Six Millions* may be applicable to the pay of the Officers and Seamen, and *Seven Millions* to *Ships-Stores, Provisions, &c.* The last two, namely, the stores and provisions being in a constant state of movement, both at home and abroad, furnish abundant resource for frauds and depredations, which may certainly be greatly diminished, though perhaps impracticable to be eradicated entirely.

The object, therefore, is to devise means whereby this *diminution* may be accomplished: and in pursuing this important inquiry, it will be necessary to precede it by the following general view of the Laws now in being, which relate to offences committed in the Naval and other Public Departments.

The Acts of the 31st of Elizabeth, (cap. 4.) and the 22d of Charles II. (cap. 5.) made it felony, without Benefit of Clergy, to steal or embezzle any of his Majesty's Military or Naval Stores or Provisions, above the value of Twenty Shillings.

By the 9 and 10 of William III. (cap. 41.) the Receivers of embezzled stores, or such as should have the same in their custody, are subject to a penalty of £.200.

From this period, till the 1st of George the First, the attention of the Legislature does not seem to have been directed to this object; when by the statute,

statute, 1st Geo. I. stat. 2. cap. 25, the principal Officers or Commissioners of the Navy were authorized to issue warrants to search for Public Property stolen or embezzled, and to punish the Offenders by fine or imprisonment.

A succeeding Act, (9 Geo. I. cap. 8.) empowered the Judges to mitigate the fine of £.200 imposed on persons having in their possession public stores, and to punish the offenders corporally, by causing them to be publicly whipped, or kept at hard labour for six months in the House of Correction ; which certainly was a great improvement.

By the Act 17 Geo. II. c. 40. jurisdiction was given to the Judges of Assize, and the General Quarter Sessions, to try the Offenders, and punish them by a fine not exceeding £.200, imprisonment for three months, and other corporal punishment.

The Laws on this subject were further amended by the 9th of his present Majesty, cap. 35 ; by which the *Treasurer, Comptroller, Surveyor, Clerk of the Acts*, or any Commissioner of the Navy, are empowered to act as Justices, in causing Offenders to be apprehended and prosecuted. These powers were given with a view to establish a greater degree of energy in detections : but experience has shewn that the purpose has not been answered.

The last Act which relates to the protection of the Public Stores, was made the 12th year of his present Majesty's reign (cap. 24.) and related solely
to

to burning ships, warehouses, and naval, military, or victualing stores, in any of the dominions of the Crown ; which offence is made felony without Benefit of Clergy.

A very superficial view of the above Laws will demonstrate their insufficiency to the object of *Prevention*. And even if they were complete, the task imposed on the public officers, who are on every occasion to act as Justices, has proved from experience to be a measure ill calculated to attain the object in view, namely, the detection of offenders ; otherwise the evil would not have increased.—Other *remedies* must therefore be applied. It is not, however, by any single act of the Legislature, that the enormous frauds and depredations in the Navy and Victualing Departments of his Majesty's service, which the Commissioners and chief Officers, under whose management they are placed, are so anxious to suppress,* can be remedied : This important object must

* Much to the honour of the present Commissioners, both of the Navy and Victualing, a most laudable zeal has been manifested to suppress the frauds, embezzlements and pillage, which have so long afflicted these departments of the public service. The following copy of a letter from the Solicitor to the Navy Board to the Author of this Tract, is a strong proof, not only of the sense they entertain of the evils which are felt to exist, but of the necessity of a speedy and effectual remedy being applied.—

“ SIR,

Norfolk Street, 19 May, 1799.

“ THE Commissioners of the Navy having an intention of applying to Parliament, to extend and amend the Laws, for preventing the

must be obtained by a combination of various salutary measures, calculated to afford collateral aid to specific Legislative Regulations, and to secure their effectual execution, by means which are now to be explained under their respective heads.—

I. A GENERAL POLICE SYSTEM.

By the Establishment of a Central Board of Police, on the Plan strongly recommended by the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Finance, in their 28th Report, ordered to be printed in June 1798 :—It is there proposed to bring under regulations by licences, all those classes of dealers in *old and second-hand ships' stores—old iron and other metals*, and several other dangerous and suspicious trades, the uncontrolled exercise of which, by persons of loose conduct, is known to contribute to the concealment and multiplication of crimes.—Infinite embarrassments would, through this collateral me-

the embezzlement and stealing of his Majesty's Naval Stores; and having directed me, in preparing the intended Bill, to attend to the suggestions and recommendations on the subject, in your excellent and valuable publication, I shall consider myself much obliged to you, as I am sure the Commissioners will, if you will, at your leisure, have the goodness to furnish me with any hints on the subject, which may have occurred to you, since the publication of your Treatise, and which you think may be worthy the attention of the Legislature.

“ I am, Sir, with respect,

“ Your most obedient humble Servant,

“ P. Colquhoun, Esq.

CHA. BICKNELL.”

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dium, be placed in the way of those particular Dealers, who reside in the vicinity of the Dock-yards, and who, by a variety of criminal devices, while they are instrumental in doing much mischief, have been able, in many instances, to elude Justice, and to carry on their nefarious practices with impunity.

A Board of Police so organized, by means of Licences and subordinate Officers, as to keep the conduct of these classes of delinquents in view who, by giving facilities to the embezzlers and stealers of naval and other stores, are the chief sources from whence the evil springs ; and with power to refuse Licences to those who are known to have been guilty of criminal conduct ; would operate very powerfully in limiting these classes of dealers to the honest part of their trade, by which infinite mischief would be prevented.

II. A LOCAL POLICE FOR THE DOCK-YARDS.

SALUTARY as the Central Board, recommended by the Select Committee on Finance, must certainly be in controlling and checking the Naval plunder, in common with the general delinquency of the whole country, it would seem indispensably necessary, under circumstances where the moving property is so extensive, and where there exists so many resources and temptations leading to the commission of crimes, to fix on some one person the responsibility

bility of carrying the Laws into effect, and of controlling and overawing the various classes of Delinquents, whose attention is directed to the Dock-yards, as a means of obtaining plunder: That for this purpose, one able and intelligent Magistrate should preside in a Police Office, to be established by Law, at or near the Dock-yards, at *Chatham*, *Portsmouth*, and *Plymouth*, with an establishment consisting of *one Clerk, two House and four Boat Constables*, with *two Police Boats* attached to each Office. One Magistrate would be sufficient at each Office, as assistance from the neighbouring Justices could always be procured in case of sickness, or absence, or where any judicial proceeding would require two Magistrates.

No Establishment would be necessary for the Dock-yards, and Public Arsenal, at Deptford and Woolwich, as the great civil force, and the number of boats attached to the Marine Police Office at Wapping, when strengthened, extended, and improved in the manner which is proposed, would be competent to carry into effect the Laws now in being, and such as may hereafter be enacted, for the prevention and detection of offences in every part of the River Thames, from London Bridge to the Hope Point.

The Magistrate proposed to be established at Chatham, could occasionally administer justice at Sheerness, while the Boat Officers belonging to the Institution, might be employed advantageously in traversing the River Medway, and in keeping a

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watchful

watchful eye on the various Receivers of stolen goods, who reside in the vicinity of that River, between the two Dock-yards.

At Portsmouth and Plymouth there would be regular employment for the respective Magistrates, and the Boat and other Officers on these establishments.

These three Institutions may be conducted at an expence not exceeding one thousand pounds a year each, viz :—

	£.	s.	d.
To the responsible resident Magistrate - - -	300	0	0
To his Clerk - - - - -	100	0	0
To the Constables, 6 in number, 50 <i>l.</i> each -	300	0	0
To House Rent, Coal, Candles, Stationary, tear and wear of Boats, and Rewards for meri- torious Services - - - - -	300	0	0
Total - - -	1000	0	0

Towards defraying this expence, the fees which would be received, and the penalties inflicted for minor offences, under the Legislative regulations hereafter to be proposed, would go a certain length in reducing the expences of the three Police Institutions. But considering the advantages likely to result from those Establishments, were the expence to be incurred even *fifty times* the amount of what is estimated, it would in all probability be much more than compensated by the savings to the Public, which will result from the preservation of the Public property, independent of the advantages which

which must arise from an improvement in the morals of a numerous class of delinquents, who have long been in a course of criminal turpitude.

A Police System thus organized under the direction of a Magistrate in each situation, whose attention would be solely confined *to this one object*, could not fail to be productive of the greatest good, especially when aided by officers, well selected and encouraged to be *vigilant* and *pure* in their conduct, from the advantages they would derive from a moiety of the pecuniary penalties, when offenders were convicted, in addition to their salaries, thereby rendering their situations comfortable and desirable, and fortifying them against seduction and connivance with Receivers and Thieves, as too often has been discovered to take place, with respect to parochial Constables resident near the Dock-yards, by which Public Justice has been frequently defeated. The terror which such a System would excite, and the extensive evils a Boat Police are likely to prevent, can only be conceived by those who have witnessed the effect of the Marine Police on the River Thames.

But still apposite Legislative regulations will be necessary to give full effect to this design, and the following heads are suggested as likely to be productive of infinite public advantage, when passed into a Law.

III. LEGISLATIVE REGULATIONS PROPOSED IN AID OF THE GENERAL AND LOCAL POLICE SYSTEM.

- 1st. That persons having possession of *New Naval Stores*; or *Naval Stores not more than one-third worn*, with the King's mark thereon, shall be deemed guilty of receiving goods, knowing them to have been stolen, and on conviction may be transported for 14 years; with power, however, to the Court to reduce it to seven years, or to impose a fine, or punish the offender corporally at its discretion.
- 2d. Defacing the King's Mark, on any of his Majesty's Stores, to be deemed felony, and punished by transportation for 7 or 14 years.
- 3d. The powers and provisions of the Act of 2 Geo. 3. cap. 28. *commonly called, The Bumboat Act*; and also, the general powers and provisions of the Thames Police Act, when it shall pass into a Law, to be extended to all his Majesty's Dock-yards, and to the Rivers and Creeks leading thereto, within the distance of 20 miles.
- 4th. In all cases where the Crown or its Agents shall decline to prosecute persons, in whose possession the King's Stores shall be found, any one Justice before whom the offender is carried, may proceed as for an offence under the *Bumboat Act*, or the *Thames Police Act* (by which maritime offences are to be more minutely explained) and if the party shall not give an account to the satisfaction of
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of the Justice, how the said goods came into his possession, to be convicted of a misdemeanor, and subject to a fine of 40s. or such other minor punishment as these Acts direct.

5th. That all Marine Police Constables (whether the *Thames Police*, the *Medway Police*, or the *Police Offices* at Portsmouth and Plymouth) shall have power to board all hoys and craft in the service of his Majesty, while employed in conveying stores, or in returning after such stores are delivered, for the purpose of searching the same; and in all cases, where stores are found which appear to have been abstracted from the cargo, or otherwise unlawfully obtained, to seize and convey the same, with the offender or offenders, (without prejudice to the service) before a Justice; and in case the Solicitor for the Crown, (on due notice given, shall decline to prosecute for the major offence,) the parties in whose custody the stores were found, not giving a satisfactory account of obtaining the same, shall be convicted of a misdemeanor, and punished by fine or imprisonment.

6th. The act of having *jiggers or small pumps, or bladders with or without nozzles, or casks for drawing off liquor in hoys or craft; of throwing goods over board when pursued to elude detection; of fabricating false bills of parcels, to cover suspected goods, and defeat the ends of Justice; of having goods in possession, suspected to be King's stores, and not giving a good account of the same; of refusing*
to

to assist Marine Police Constables in the execution of their duty ; of obstructing the said Officers ; of damaging Police Boats, to be punished as misdemeanors, under the authority of the said Bumboat Act, and the proposed Thames Police Act ; namely, by fine or imprisonment.

7th. *Boats, craft, carts, carriages, or horses, &c.* from which stolen or embezzled King's stores shall be seized, to be forfeited, and disposed of as directed by the said Marine Police Bill.

8th. In all cases where, in seizing stores, articles not having the King's mark shall be found intermixed with stores having such mark, the party in whose possession they are found shall be obliged to give an account, to the satisfaction of the Justice, by what means he obtained the unmarked stores, otherwise the same to be forfeited, and sent to his Majesty's Repositories.

9th. Power to be granted to the Commissioners of the Navy, or any one Justice, to issue warrants, on proper information upon oath to Peace Officers, to search for King's stores, *without any proof of such stores being actually stolen, taken, or carried away.* The power of the Commissioners in this case to extend to all Counties in England.

10th. The Laws relating to falsifying, erasing, or fabricating *documents, vouchers, books, accounts, or writings*, of any kind, with an intent to defraud his Majesty, to be revised and amended, so as to apply more pointedly to offences of this nature.

11th. Persons

11th. Persons in his Majesty's service in any of the Dock-yards or Public Arsenals, having King's stores in their possession, to the amount of 5*l.* value, and not being authorised to keep such stores, to be conclusive evidence of embezzlement, and to be punished by transportation.

12th. As an encouragement to excite vigilance in Officers of Justice, it is humbly proposed, that the Commissioners of his Majesty's *Navy, Victualing, and other Departments*, should be authorised, and required by Law, to pay the following rewards for the conviction of offenders, on the certificate of Judges and Magistrates, before whom such convictions took place—

40*l.* on Conviction for any Capital Offence.

20*l.* on Conviction for Felony, punished—Transportation, Fine or Imprisonment, or Whipping before a Superior Court.

10*l.* for Misdemeanors, by Indictment before the Quarter or General Sessions of the Peace.

2*l.* for Convictions before Justices for Minor Offences.

From such *Legislative Regulations* infinite would be the advantages which might reasonably be expected, when by the establishment of a Naval Police System, their due and proper execution would be rendered certain ; and also, in all cases, where the evidence against offenders, although perfectly conclusive as to the fact, may be deficient in some points of legal nicety, by putting the *onus probandi* on the offender,

offender, and treating it as a minor offence: the ends of Public Justice will, in a great measure, be answered by inflicting some punishment on the offender, and however inferior it may be to what he deserves, it will still have an excellent effect, since it is not so much by severe punishments, as by the certainty of *some punishment* being inflicted, and the obloquy of a conviction when offences are committed, that Delinquents of this class are deterred from the commission of crimes.

Having thus traced the outlines of such remedies, for the protection of his Majesty's *Naval, Victualing, Ordnance* and other Stores, as certainly require Legislative Regulations. It remains now to consider, what other measures may appear necessary, within the limits of the authority with which the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty are invested, for the purpose of rendering the Preventive System complete.

Those which have occurred to the Author of this Tract will be classed under the following Heads :

IV. *Regulations respecting the Sale of Old Stores.*

V. *The Abolition of the Pesquisite of Chips.*

VI. *The Abolition of Fees and Perquisites of every description, to be remunerated by a liberal increase of Salaries.*

VII. *An improved Mode of keeping Accounts.*

VIII. *An annual Inventory of Stores on Hand.*

IV. OLD STORES.

THE mode at present practised in disposing of unserviceable Naval and Victualing Stores by Auction, in the Public Arsenals and Repositories, is productive of infinite evils, independent of the cover which is thereby afforded to many purchasers of loose conduct in protecting them, by means of the certificates they obtain against the penalties of the Law, as Receivers of stolen and embezzled goods of the same species and quality ; thereby not only defeating the ends of Public Justice, but operating as an encouragement to these criminal dealers to extend the iniquitous part of their trade, by holding out facilities and incitements to those who have access to commit depredations on the Public Property, which possibly would never have otherwise taken place.

The Public Sales at the Dock-yards and other Repositories, draw together men of loose and depraved morals ; who, in order to obtain bargains, do not hesitate (wherever it can be done) to seduce, by means of pecuniary gratuities, the inferior officers and labourers into the evil practice of mixing superior stores with unserviceable articles, ordered to be made up in lots so as to elude discovery. New and valuable cordage has been detected coiled within

within old cables,* while frauds also are practised as to the weight, and in the delivery of greater quantities than are actually sold.—Such practices have taken place in spite of the vigilance and attention of the superior officers, by which a two-fold mischief arises,—in the immediate loss which is sustained by the frauds thus practised, and in the cover which is thus afforded for the protection of additional stores purchased clandestinely ; perhaps from the persons who have been thus corrupted.—An evil so prominent in the view of a very able and penetrating Judge now upon the bench, as to induce him to declare publicly in Court, immediately after a trial, where a notorious offender (as many notorious offenders do) escaped Justice, under the cover of his certificates. “ *That Government had better burn their old Stores than suffer them to be the means of generating so many offences*”—or to the same effect.

It is however humbly presumed that a remedy may be applied without the destruction of such valuable materials; and the following suggestions are offered with a view to this object.

* An instance of this kind occurred about two years ago in one of the principal yards, where a large quantity of new and valuable Cordage was found concealed, within the coils of a large unserviceable Cable ; which composed one of the lots in the Catalogue of the Sale.—And thus a connection was discovered between the Criminal Purchaser and the Labourers employed in making up the Lots.

*Plan for an improved mode of disposing of unserviceable
Naval and Victualing Stores.*

1st. That instead of selling those stores upon the spot where the criminal connections are formed, the Naval articles shall be made up in assorted lots suitable to the *London, Bristol, Liverpool, Whitehaven, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Hull Markets*. That a responsible Agent should be appointed to conduct the sales at each of these *Ports*.—That they shall be men of the first respectability in the commercial line, who can give ample security for their fidelity in the execution of the trust reposed in them.—That they shall receive the stores at the yards or repositories where they are made up, and convey them to their respective Warehouses at their own expence; on having an allowance of 6 per Cent. for *Freight-charges, Warehouse-rent, Insurance against Sea-risk and Fire*, and all other expences; and 4 per Cent. for commission on the amount of the Sales.

That the said stores shall not on any pretence be sold to dealers, but only to the *actual Consumers*, or Rope Spinners to convert into smaller cordage; nor shall any certificate be granted to purchasers on any pretence whatsoever.

That accounts of Sales shall be furnished monthly, and such sales shall be accompanied by a full remittance

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That accounts of Sales shall be furnished monthly, and such sales shall be accompanied by a full remit-

tance for the amount, it being always understood that no credit is to be allowed.

That at the end of each year, an inventory shall be transmitted on a specific day to be fixed, of the whole stores on hand, and a general account current to be then furnished; in which shall be exhibited agreeable to a form to be prescribed, a complete view of the whole transactions which have occurred during the preceding year, with a full remittance for the balance due on the said account.

2d. That the *Metalic Stores* which are deemed unserviceable shall be deposited in a commodious Magazine in London, under the charge of a responsible Agent, competent to such a trust.—That it shall be his duty to employ proper Artificers to convert all that are capable of being converted into serviceable Stores, and when so renovated, to be returned to Deptford Yard.—And such *Metalic Stores* as are incapable of being converted into useful purposes at a moderate expence, so as clearly to demonstrate a saving to Government, shall be disposed of to founders and others, at the best price that can be obtained.

The Agent for *Metalic Stores* to be allowed 10 per Cent. on the value as ascertained, by the original Invoice, founded on a survey and valuation upon oath, and this to be in full of *Freight, Carriage, Warehouse-rent, Insurance from fire, and all other expences,*

including Commission for his trouble, on all Stores that are again converted to useful purposes ; and $7\frac{1}{2}$ per Cent. on the value of such as are sold, in consequence of their being incapable of being rendered useful ; so as to make it the interest of the Agent to render as large a proportion useful as possible.

It is presumed that by an arrangement of this kind, an immense sum will be saved to the Public annually ; who would retain the Contractor's profit in all cases where Old Stores are received back at the price of old Metal, and again returned at the full contract price, after a small expence is incurred in converting them into serviceable Stores.

3d. That in consequence of the superior resource for the consumption of *Provisions, Casks, &c.* in London, that the whole of the unserviceable Victualling Stores (except such as from their small value and bulky nature will not defray the expences of conveyance) shall be collected in a large repository in London, under the charge of an able and intelligent Agent, who shall give proper security for his faithful management ; and conduct the sales upon the principles already explained *for ready money only*, rendering an account *and making his payments monthly*, and a final Account and Inventory at the end of the year ; to be at the whole expence of removing the goods from the different Repositories to the Magazine in London ; to be allowed 4 per Cent. Commission on the sales, and 6 per Cent. in lieu of all charges.

4th. That

4th. That the attention of the respective Boards may not be diverted from other objects by attending to the details, which will arise in the management of those establishments, a superintending Agent shall be appointed, who shall receive the directions of the different Boards, and correspond with the local Agents.—He shall moreover be the *Receiver General of the monthly remittances*, and shall immediately pay the same as directed by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.—It will be his duty to arrange the shipping of Old Stores from the different Yards, in conformity to the wants or demands of the respective Agents, so as to keep up their several assortments, by conveying to each not only such articles, (as far as it can be done) as are most in demand, but also such as comparatively fetch the best price.—He shall receive the monthly and yearly accounts, and lay an abstract of the same before the Lords of the Admiralty, and the Navy and Victualing Board respectively, as they apply to their different departments, and shall be the general medium of communication from the respective Boards to the local Agents.—The superintending Agent shall transmit a regular invoice to the local Agents of all goods shipped :—Shall keep regular books and accounts of all transactions under his charge, and shall receive for his trouble 1 *per cent.* on the Remittances or Payments which he may make, under the directions of the Lords of the Admiralty.

By

By this arrangement it will be the interest of all the parties concerned, to render the sales as productive as possible ; and as the stores in question will constantly be exposed to sale, where the demand for such articles is most extensive, the probability is, that higher prices will be obtained than at present ; and that upon the whole, after paying all expences, a larger aggregate sum will be received annually by Government, since, as the sales are only to be made to the actual Consumers, the Dealer's profit will make a part of the Sale Price, and will be thereby secured to the Public. As men of the first character and respectability may be expected to solicit for such Commissions, no doubt can be entertained, either of the purity of their conduct, or their exertions to sell to the best advantage. Their credit and interest, and also the emulation between one Agent and another, as to who shall make the best sales, will prove a powerful stimulous and a strong ground of security.—Above all, the plan is easy and practicable:—It imposes no trouble upon the superior or inferior Officers in the different Naval Departments, and no doubt can be entertained, that while it shuts up all the avenues to fraud and peculation, which at present operate so powerfully in facilitating the stealing and embezzling of Naval and Victualing Stores, in the result it will prove highly beneficial to Government.

V. THE PERQUISITE OF CHIPS.

THE extensive evils arising from the permission granted to Artificers in the Dock-yards, to convert chips to their own use, and to remove them in bundles from the Dock-yards, having already been noticed, it may only be necessary to add, that on the abolition of this perquisite, which the Author has reason to believe is now in contemplation, a liberal increase of wages should be made to the Artificers in lieu thereof; and that hereafter Chips should not be sold in the Yards by Public Auction, but removed to a place of deposit at some small distance, and disposed of, not to the highest bidder, but at such price as should be offered above the estimated value, and by no means by contract.

By adopting this mode, the saving of *useful Timber, Time, and Property*, which, through the medium of the existing practice, is *purloined, lost and stolen*, would probably exceed any estimate that has been formed from a view of the present abuses.

This measure, while it forms an important Link in the preventive Chain, would appear to be easy and practicable.

If necessary the superintending Agent for unservicable stores, whose functions have already been expained, could take upon him the sole management of the disposal of the chips at the different Yards, by
which

which a handsome sum might be obtained annually in aid of the resources of the State, perhaps more than would be sufficient to pay the additional wages of the Artificers, while no existing arrangement in the Yards was disturbed, nor any trouble given to the Officers, who at present fill the respective Departments in those Arsenals.

VI. THE ABOLITION OF FEES AND PERQUISITES, AND AN INCREASE OF SALARIES.

THE total Abolition of Fees guarded by the severest penalties, is an important object in the preventive System: Until this is effected, it will be in vain to expect purity of conduct. Under this pretext, men of loose principles, in transactions with Government, seldom fail to seduce from the strict line of their duty, *avaricious, extravagant, or indigent Officers*, whose business it is to check and control the receipt and delivery of property, and to *arrange, settle, and adjust Accounts, or to form Public Documents*. The delusion and seduction of these Officers is not seldom effected by the supposed liberality of those whose business must pass through their hands; and they are not at all times perfectly aware of the injury that is done to the Public.

It has already been observed, and it is a circumstance much to be lamented, that in too many instances, where individuals have pecuniary transactions with any of the Departments of Government, a

dereliction of principle is apparent which does not extend to the general intercourse of society, and hence arises the necessity of *stronger guards*, where the Public interest is concerned; and nothing appears to be better calculated to counteract this baneful propensity in the human mind than *the total abolition of fees and perquisites*.

It is said to be no uncommon thing to pay 300*l.* for a Clerk's situation in the Dock-yards, where the salary does not exceed 30*l.* or 40*l.* a year; and it is known that some who hold such situations live very expensively. It may be fairly asked, in what manner a person so situated is to reimburse himself? the conclusion is obvious, and the result has been already explained, which may perhaps be still farther elucidated by stating the following fact:—

An Officer of Justice having discovered some instances of pillage and peculation going forward in the course of the removal of old copper and other articles, from a dismantled ship of war, complained to the Store-keeper in the Dock-yard, whose province it was to have received those articles into his charge, which were conveyed elsewhere.—He replied thus: “ D—n it, mind your own business.—Such things “ have always been done, and will continue in spite “ of you and me; it will, at any rate, last our time.”

While the munificence of Government is fully commensurate to the liberal remuneration of its servants, so as to place them above all temptations to
abuse

abuse the trust reposed in them : and while such remuneration is in itself no less politic than just, the object and view of the Author of these pages differs widely from this faithless servant of the Crown. The suggestions now offered, lead to measures, which he now trusts to the honour and credit of those respectable characters, at the head of the different departments, are in the best train of being adopted, by the total abolition of Fees and Perquisites, and a liberal Increase of Salary, in lieu of the reduction of income, which such an arrangement will occasion : Such salaries as will secure to the Nation those inestimable advantages, which always result from *rectitude of conduct, zeal, accuracy, and fidelity*, in the discharge of Public trusts committed to subordinate Officers. It is by this and other wise and practicable arrangements, that a confidence is to be established, “ that “ the resources of the State *will not only last our “ time,*” but extend to many generations ; while the improvement of Public morals will contribute, in an eminent degree, to the happiness and prosperity of the country.

VII. AN IMPROVED MODE OF KEEPING ACCOUNTS.

UNDER an impression, that very few improvements have been introduced, since the establishment of the original System, for keeping the Navy and Victualing Accounts, brought forward by KING JAMES II. when Duke of York ; while the frauds which have
been

been committed by various devices, prove some imperfections in the mode of accomptantship as now practised, since no means appear to exist, whereby deficiencies can be checked and discovered ; it may be worthy of inquiry, whether many of the modern improvements, which the vast extent of our Commerce has introduced, might not be rendered useful in establishing new Checks, by means of a System of Book-keeping, which would have the same effect in detecting frauds, and discovering inaccuracies, as prevails in arranging and closing the accounts of well-regulated Commercial Establishments ; adopting at the same time in the general detail, particularly in the transit of stores, some of these excellent regulations, which have been found so salutary and useful in the System of the Excise. Of the practicability of improvements of this nature there can be little doubt, since it merely depends on the exercise of that *knowledge, attention, and assiduity*, which, when properly exerted, has generally accomplished objects, which have often appeared impracticable to minds uninformed, or not enlarged by an extensive intercourse with the world, or a knowledge of the general affairs of life :—But as this observation can in no respect apply to the respectable and intelligent Individuals, who superintend the Great Public Concerns, which have been subject to the various abuses, which they feel so anxious to remedy, sanguine hopes are entertained, that an improvement in the mode of keeping the Official Accounts may be speedily carried into effect.

VIII. AN ANNUAL INVENTORY OF STORES.

SUPPOSING an accurate System of Book-keeping to be adopted, and to be followed as a part of the proposed System of Accuracy, indispensably necessary, *by an annual account of Stores*; the advantages resulting from it are not to be estimated by the most sanguine mind. Independent of the benefits which would arise from the general accuracy, which would thus incircle the whole œconomy of the design, discoveries would be made wherever frauds or embezzlements took place, while the labour and expence, which such a task might impose, would be compensated one hundred fold, in the National advantages which it would produce.

THUS has the Author briefly gone over the whole ground, which he had assigned to himself, as comprehending every object on the subject of the depredations on his Majesty's Stores, which appeared likely to render his suggestions useful to his country, whether they relate to improved Legislative Regulations requiring the aid of Parliament, or to Measures competent for the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to carry into effect. In the prosecution of this task he has been stimulated in a particular degree, by the laudable and patriotic disposition, which has been manifested to promote improvements in Naval Police,
and

and the honourable proofs he has received of a desire to render his suggestions useful.

If the period should indeed arrive (and it is to be hoped it may soon arrive) when these suggestions, or even a part of them, shall be acted upon, in a manner calculated to promote the National Interest, the Author of these pages will then feel himself gratified, and rewarded by the pleasing reflection, that his well-meant labours, in placing an important branch of the political œconomy of the country in this particular point of view, have not been in vain.

THE END.



